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Investigation of Iran's Educational Structure during Qajar Era*

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Abstract

During Qajar era, just like the earlier eras, the pedagogy was not provided to the public. The nobles and aristocrats used to appoint a tutor and most of talented and clever students have been deprived from pedagogy because of inadequate number of schools. This era is considered as the era of cultural changes and people movements. The era is also known as the era of passing from pre-modernistic Iran to developed Iran. Given the increased relations between Iran and Europe and construction of schools and sending students to Europe, different sciences were gradually propagated in Iran. Abbas Mirza imitated intentionally the similar corrective process devised in Ottoman Empire during Sultan Selim III sovereignty and started a military corrective plan entitled new system including introduction of European military technology and new methods of training soldiers. Thereby, other measures started to be taken including sending over students to overseas, translation of European books, establishment of print house, newspaper publish and other than these developments and changes made Iran shortcomings to become clear against Europe. Therefore, the first steps for education system development were taken in this era by Abbas Mirza and Ghaem Magham Farahani and followed by Mirza Taghi khan Amir Kabir. Thereby, the preliminary stages of modern era were taken.

Keywords: Iran during Qajar era, Educational structure, Abbas Mirza, Foreign education institutes, Dar al-funun, Maktab khaneh (School House).

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Introduction

Qajar era is a period of cultural change and important popular movements. The era is also known as the era of passing from pre-modernistic Iran to developed Iran. This dynasty was founded by Agha Mohammad Khan. He was an intelligent and powerful military commander and had ruled the country and founded an integrated territory. Agha Mohammad Khan was ruthless toward his internal and external enemies because of the attitude he had gained during his lifetime and captivity. They would have punished and prosecuted them with the most intensive manners. This ruthless assignation resulted in his assassination, too. He had no chance for cultural changes during his short time office. However, when he died the territory was succeeded in an integrate state. Reign of Fathali Shah was coincided to the political and economic changes in Europe which resulted in the fact that states like France and Britain to pay attention to Iran. Iran was predisposed to know the west by competition of France and Britain to have more influence in Iran and by the attacks of Russia for having access to the high seas. Iran was defeated by Russia which made the powers to find the reasons and find solutions for them. Because of proximity to Europe and its geographical position, the cultural and corrective changes were put to start first from Azerbaijan where the Crown Prince and his clever Vizier Ghaem Magham Farahani were resided. Abbas Mirza and Ghaem Magham had first sought to change and improve ammunition and what was important for them was military reforms. Thus, to realize those changes, they sent over a group of students. The students had been appointed in positions related to their field of study. In addition to this measure, the military boards played a major role in cultural changes during Qajar era. The European experts entered Iran and this was facilitated by the Ambassadors and the treaties signed between Iran and other nations. It was then that sciences like military, cavalry, artillery, infantry and medicine had been taught by those experts to Iranians.

Educational system during Qajar era

The educational system can be divided into two parts during this era: 1. The traditional system which followed the pre-Qajar system emerged based on the social and historical necessities. 2. New educational system.

Traditional education system

The traditional education was prescribed into two forms during Qajar era: education prescribed in schools and Maktab khaneh (in the Qajar era Maktab khaneh⁴ was local center for reading and written) (Kasravi, 2000: 77). Maktab khaneh was dedicated to children education while school was for the purpose of religious students (Jamalzadeh, 2001: 89). School was introducing a type of education where the clergies were educated. Though there were several schools in different cities, Maktab khaneh was more popular and was considered as the specialized education in the traditional system. The education prescribed in school was, though, as a result of religious social necessity meeting one of the main needs of the society, there were critiques during this era who were opponent to the educational methods, educational texts and efficiency of this branch of the education system.

Education in Maktab khaneh was prescribed through two methods during Qajar Era: the private and the public Maktab khaneh (TorabiFarsani, 2010: 24). The private one was less popular than the public Maktab khaneh and it was special for the higher social classes. The private Maktab khaneh would have been held in states and provinces, too (Pasandideh, 1966: 44). There are reports on the tutoring in some of villages (Dolatabadi, 1983: 15). Unlike the school and private Maktab khaneh, the public Maktab khaneh was most popular and had the first rank in the traditional education system. The private and public Maktab khaneh

⁴ School House.

were not so different while there were differences physically and formally. The public Maktab khaneh was in two forms: the first group can be called as the pre- primary school. This kind of Maktab khaneh was the smallest educational unit. The second group was public Maktab khaneh which was the most popular around the nation and was ranked at the top level of traditional and educational entities and centers. Establishment of a Maktab khaneh was not subjected to a rule or regulations because there was no supervising authority. The necessary condition for establishing a Maktab khaneh was a schoolmaster (Maktabdar) and the sufficient condition was the schoolmaster's personality and acceptability (Ghasemi pooya, 1998: 52).

Sending students to Europe during Fathali Shah reign

During Fathali Shah Reign, the pedagogy was such that the religious and appearance customs had been taught to students from childhood. The children would have started to study Arabic and Persian when they were 7 or 8 and then they were prescribed sharia law (Ravandi, 2004: 129).

Iranian have gotten familiar to the Europe during AqQoyunlu and QaraQoyunlu and Safavid dynasties when the relations with Europe predisposed the trade and buying cannons and rifles and obtaining sciences and skills. However, it was during Qajar dynasty when the most important measures were taken to get familiarized with new civilization and thoughts in Europe (Eghbal, 2014: 4). Abbas Mirza was the only authoritative man who started first to teach his military troops based on the European styles (Azizi, 2014: 119).

One of the appreciated measures taken by Abbas Mirza and Ghaem Magham was that they sent a certain number of students, workers and craftsmen to the abroad for learning secrets of the Europe civilization and their language. When the French board was in Iran, it was agreed with Abbas Mirza every year a group of young persons to Paris but this was not realized and because the Britain ambassador Sir Haford Junes came Iran and because of the need to draw the attention of Iran a contract was concluded regarding to send young students to London for education. Therefore, the first group of students was sent to England (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 122).

Deliberately simulating the similar process of reform happened during Sultan Selim III reign In Ottoman Empire, Abbas Mirza started a military reform plan named the new system including getting familiar with European military technologies and modern methods of training soldiers. It was also a mean for starting other measures like sending students to abroad, translation of European books, establishing printing house, publishing newspaper and etc. These changes caused the deficiencies in Iran to become cleared compared to Europe. Europe was a sinister threat for Iran's integrity and a model for change, as it has been considered by some people (Ringer, 2002: 27).

Cultural and educational institutes of foreign countries in Iran during Mohammad Shah reign

During Mohammad Shah reign, foreign cultural and educational institutes were established which affect the cultural changes during that era. These schools had people to get familiar to the western sciences and their teaching method and predisposed the establishment of western style schools around the nation. Indeed, there were government officials interested in learning western sciences and skills and their decisions put Iran in the path for change. The schools were useful for Iranian to be introduced with west knowledge and development. However, the schools had disadvantages because they were used as a place for disintegrating Christian sects in Iran and would have made the enemies to attack Iran specially Ottomans and Russians (Nategh, 1986: 8).

It was during Mohamad Shah Reign that the American and French priests established the first western style schools in Iran and, thereby, was exposed to the European thoughts. The first school was established in

Urmia by Perkins, an American priest, in 1838 where the children were taught new sciences and carpet weaving and forging. A Christian preacher used to administer this school because the American church had established the school for preach. By a decree issued by Mohammad Shah, subjects like history, geography, geometry and arithmetic started to be prescribed in this school (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 240). During Mohammad Shah Reign, having entered Iran by the aid of Kent Dosersi the French ambassador at that time, Lazarists could obtain the license for teaching children. Upon this decree, Eugene Bure one of the pioneer Lazarists, established the first French school in Tabriz with 14 students and he could author a French-Persian dictionary by the aid of these students and granted to Mohammad Shah⁵. During this era, Lazarist could establish one school in Urmia and two schools in Isfahan for boys in 1840 while they had many barriers. At the end of Mohammad Shah reign, they could establish 26 schools with 400 male students and 6 schools for girls and several orphanages and clinics (Soltanian, 2010: 60). To teach French, Eugene Bure translated French grammar into the Persian and had Iranian students to be familiar with French language. His style and development was such that Mahd Olia entrusted Naseraldin Mirza to him for French language education and Mohammad Shah supported this school. He also was allowed to establish a school in Jolfa in Isfahan just like the one established in Tabriz and enroll Muslim, catholic and Armenian students (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 241). The school Eugene Bure established experienced no protest because enrolled Muslim students, too (Nategh, 1996: 162). In Iranian cities, Europeans established cultural and educational institutes by the aid of religious and non-religious boards (Behnam, 1996: 48). The American preachers' board had engaged in education, medicine, and lecture and printing house. They also established a printing house for printing textbooks (Ringer, 2002). American mission had two branches: east and west Iran. The west branch in Urmia was administered by the aid of American and western teachers while the east mission had school and orphanages in Khoy. These schools taught courses like carpentry and lock making in Khoy and horticulture and breeding silkworm in Urmia (Varahram, 2006: 305). Eugene Bure established a school in Tabriz named nations recognition school aiming at religious and educational revolution. There out of those 14 were Armenian and other were Muslims. The program prescribed in this school included courses like French language and literature, philosophy and European sciences. However, the school was closed after Bure left Iran (Ringer, 2002: 131). French Lazarists were active and engaged in Salmas sans villages in Urmia. It was then that German, Russian and English missionaries engaged there. The French were the most successful among them and French alliance was established in Tehran and Tabriz. Sen-o Senan monks school had been established in Tabriz and Isfahan. Saint Louie School was established in Tehran at that time and the French language was taught there for free to applicants (Behnam, 1996: 48). French missionaries could not complete their two opponents politically at first due to which they engaged cultural activities and they were in hope of increasing commercial ties with France proponents, diplomas of schools, through teaching French language. Iranian young people thought that France had not participated in Russian and English colonial policies and hoped to open the world of knowledge and development teaching them language and literature and they also have known France the unquestioned heirs of the thoughts of the Enlightenment and the Great Revolution (Nategh, 1986: 8).

Education courses during the Naser al-Din Shah

Kerzen in his book named "Iran and Iran Case" mentioning about school and Maktab in Iran stating that there is a kind of school or Maktab in cities and villages of Iran. Clergies have Maktab in mosques where children learn Persian alphabet and some arithmetic and Quranic⁶ literacy. While everybody can read, a few of them are able to write. Therefore, one who can both write and read adds a title of Mirza before their names. The upper level of Maktab is primary school where the kids learn a bit national poems and get

⁵ Mohammad Shah, he was third king of Qajarian.

⁶ The Quran is the Muslim scripture and in Qajarian era was taught in school houses.

familiar with grammar. Iran, the higher education or high school education is provided to public in limited number of schools or colleges where the students engage science and jurisprudence and medicine (Curson, 2001: 637). Just like the previous eras, in Qajar era, there is no place for public education. The nobles and aristocrats appoint tutor and most of clever students are deprived from education because of lack of adequate number of schools. For example, Amir Kabir⁷ could not have been educated because he was not from upper class and his father used to work as a chef for Ghaem Magham⁸. He got a good opportunity which emerged his inherent ingenuity and GhaemMagham tried to educate him (Ravandi, 2004: 132). Given the relations between Iran and west and familiarity to their advancement and technology and increasing Iranian travels to Europe and Ottoman Empire and comparing their conditions with Iran, most of Iranian was exposed to the western government and society (Yousevand & Rostami Hormoz, 2017: 74). The travelogues written at Abbas Mirza time caused some beliefs to be emerged about Iran's change and reform. The travelogue writers like Mirza Saleh Shirazi and Mirza Mostafa Afshar believed that the world has entered a new and modern era and it is required to implement modernization plan to reach such development and the education had a special place in this plan. Therefore, education reform and establishing Iranian high school under European style named Darul-funun was the reflection of educational projects which had been discussed by individuals like Mostafa Afshar (Ringer, 2002: 77). As the relations between Iran and Europe expanded, the modernization thoughts were gradually expanded in Iran and those who were travelling abroad would have attempted to establish similar institutes. The travelogue of Khosro Mirza delegation board in 1828 to Russian court together with Mirza Saleh Shirazi and Mirza Taghi Khan Farahani and evidences have been recorded by Mirza Mostafa khan Afshar (secretary of the expedition delegation). When they visited places like scientific institutes, industrial centers, hospitals and other installations in Russia, they regretted. Mirza Mostafa stated: it would be very nice if Iranian government sends some skillful young people to this factory to get experienced in industrial sciences. He also stated in Moscow: it is a pity not to note the development gained by our neighboring country during a short term (Adamiyat, 2005: 38).

New educational system in Qajar era:

The new schools during Qajar era can be classified into three groups: first, the new schools established by European and American missionaries aiming at educating religious minorities and preaching the Christianity⁹. Second, the schools established by the government and were known as governmental schools (Einolsaltane, 1995: 2870). Third, the schools established by Iranians proponent of knowledge and they were known as national and private schools.

The first schools established in Iran with modern style were those opened by European and American missionaries. The first modern style school in Iran was established by an American priest named Perkinz in Urmia in 1838 aiming at preaching Christianity (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 240). The second was established by a French priest named Eugene Bure in Tabriz in 1839. This was welcomed warmly (Flonden, 1977: 62). He established another school in Jolfa in Isfahan in 1841 because of supports by Mohammad Shah. Schools after schools were established during Qajar era by Americans, English, and Germans in several cities like Urmia, Tabriz, Salmas, Jolfa, Isfahan, Hamadan, Kerman, and Tehran aiming at preaching religion and teaching foreign languages. In addition to these schools with mostly religious forms, European established non-religious schools, too. These schools were supported externally regarding their stimulations and were to realize political and cultural goals of supporters, founders and European teachers (Ringer, 2002: 125).

⁷ Amir Kabir was deputy regent of Nasir al-Din Shah. He was founder of School Dar ul-funun.

⁸ Mirza Jesus Farahani influential figures in the first Qajar. He was deputy regent of Abbas Mirza.

⁹ Abbas Mirza was tolerant regarding foreign schools.

French alliance and Jewish alliance were some to name. It is required to note two things on the schools established in Iran with new style by Americans and Europeans: first, those schools had been established for religious minorities but some Muslim children were also studying there (Nategh, 1986: 69). Second, few number of those schools could continue to be active for a long time such that the religious minorities initiated to establish schools for themselves after the constitutionalism revolution. The public schools were another type which were established by the government. One of those schools was Dar ul-funun.

Dar ul-funun and new education

The first modern school was established by the government signifying that the government had undertaken the responsibility of education at the first place and this is unexpected and an important issue in Iran's history. Although Naser al-Din Shah was worry that the traditional education supporters will not accept and agree, Amir Kabir knew the necessity of establishing such schools. Therefore, Dar ul-funun was founded aiming at meeting state military and technical needs as well as training military and administrative cadre (Mohit Tabatabaei, 1996: 611). Dar ul-funun was not aimed at expanding public education because the first call published in Vaghaye Etefaghieh newspaper¹⁰ invited nobles and aristocrats' children for attendance (Khormoji, 1965: 108).

Establishing motive of Dar ul-funun

Amir Kabir, the prime minister, established Dar ul-funun. He thought that such a school must be established for achieving technology (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 151). He was missioned as a political envoy to Russia, Ottoman Empire and Yerevan¹¹. These travels affected the establishment of Dar ul-funun deeply. He was missioned to Russia together with aboard of officials for offering an apology to the Russian government because of Gribaydof assassination who had been assassinated for exchanging Torkmanchay treaty¹². This board was in St. Petersburg for two months and would have visited every day one of the Russian industrial and educational centers. The reforms and developments achieved in Russia were things that could have drawn Amir Kabir's attention. On the other hand, he was eager to implement such developments and reforms in Iran, too. Definitely, after this travel and visiting those centers, he decided to establish Dar ul-funun.

One of the things that Amir Kabir had to establish this school was the fact that he had observed undesirable events just because of technical and military inadequacy and incompetency of the country when he was prime minister of Azerbaijan. Therefore, he refrained and discarded what Ghaem Magham and Haji Mirza Aghasi had experienced. Thus, he decided to legislate rule of education for all those undertake the responsibility of guarding the country against attacks by foreigners. Another factor affected the establishment of Dar ul-funun was translation of European books and newspapers. Dar ul-funun was indeed imitation of Ottoman Dar ul-funun. Amir Kabir noted so much the Ottoman Dar ul-funun because he could understand the effects of the school on the Ottoman society when he was missioned as an envoy there.

Teaching method in Dar ul-funun

The scientific courses were first prescribed theoretically. However, the students of medicine would have taken after one year to the hospitals to be trained practically and medically. The first medical training was

¹⁰ Vaghaye Etefaghieh was one of the most important newspapers of the Qajar era.

¹¹ Armenian center.

¹² Torkmanchay treaty: one of the treatise between Iran and Russian during the Qajar era, some Caucasian inhabited areas of Iran were cut and let to Russia's accession.

to remove bladder stone. Dr. Polak¹³ and a Russian physician were in charge of operation. It was in 1855 that Monsieur Fetokim physics, chemistry and pharmacy teacher, went to Europe together with Farokh Khan Aminolmolk and brought instruments needed for his work in the laboratory and the students could work in the laboratory from that time on (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 16). In addition, students of engineering would have taken to elevations for practical works. Indeed, in Dar ul-funun, the science was put into the activity and became practical gradually such that students used to draw maps on the blackboard and cooperate with Casteger, an Austrian engineer serving Iran government, in road making. The students of military fields were put to train soldiers in drilling fields and cooperated with European authorities. They were sent to Herat, Fars and Khuzestan fronts during war time and intermingled the science and practically learnt course together. For example, some students of engineering, artillery, cavalry and infantry as well as medicine students were with the army when attacking Herat and South war (GhasemiPooya, 1998: 497).

Educational board of Dar ul-funun

At the first, most of teachers were from Europe because there was no teacher in Iran could teach in the school. The government was incredibly forced to appoint foreigner teachers. Therefore, when the school was under construction, Amir Kabir sent John Davood to Austria and Germany in 1849 for appointing teachers. This was symbolized as Amir Kabir's disagreement and fight with Russian and English colonialism made him not to appoint English, French and Russian teachers. He knew French and English teachers and missionaries in Iran that they have been following their own government and they were not actually proponent of Iran and because the French and English governments were allied in colonialism policy it was not in benefit of Iran their influence to increase. Moreover, he has visited Russia personally and knew that this country had no political benefits in Iran because of the political turmoil between two countries and the fact that Russia had not have such a political and colonial power out of Europe and these two country were well-known because of their scientific developments. In particular the Austrian government which was popularized after defeating Napoleon and convening Wien congress. Therefore, Amir Kabir decided to bring Austrian and Russian teachers (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 259).

National schools

One of the school group was public schools founded and established by those who were proponents of modern knowledge aiming at expanding public education and changing old education system. Mirza Hassan Rashidieh was the pioneer in this regard. His father was a clergy man and he established the first modern national school in Yerevan in 1922. He established first primary school in 1926 in Shishgelan in Tabriz and named it Rashidieh School (GhasemiPooya, 1998: 189). Within ten years (1926- 1936), he established several schools in different neighborhoods of Tabriz and one school in Mashhad all of which faced disagreements and were closed. Mirza Hassan Rashidieh went to Tehran when Aminoldoleh was prime minister and established the first national primary school supported by the prime minister. This school, which was known as Rashidieh School in the capital city, was a model for proponents of the modern knowledge such that they themselves initiated to establish a primary school.

The role of education in the development Iran's Qajar

It must not expected that during the century when the relations could not expanded over the neighboring countries the governmental officials to be well informed on the changes happening around the world.

¹³ Jakob Edvard Polak. He was court physician of Nasser al-Din Shah.

Therefore, there was no reason to think of backwardness and necessity of removing it until the recurring military defeats and contacts with Europe objectivized this necessity. The main step for getting familiar with modern European knowledge and civilization has been taken during Qajar era because it was at that time that Iran was exposed to the European policy directly and was entered to the field of the European policy to put in another way and understood in a short time that it is not easy to encounter it and must be equipped with the new weapon of the civilization. The developed vehicles and expanded colonial policies prevented Iran from seclusion and living with its ancient customs. The governments saw their power in Iran's weakness and attempted their best for such prevention (Mahboobi Ardakani, 1991: 49).

Conclusion

In the shadow of the military and foreign relation of several predisposing factor for the development and structure of the educational system during the Qajar era, which include:

1. Abbas Mirza, the successor of Fathali Shah, and his Vizier Mirza Ghaem Magham noted the military advisers and sent students and workers abroad and established modern industrial institutes in Azerbaijan and had the foreigner writers' book to be translated and other measures which have been followed by some of ministers in Mohammad Shah Reign and Naser-al- din Shah.
2. French and English military boards entered Iran and initiated reforms in Iran's army and making weapon and mapping and translating books.
3. European and Armenian traders and preachers entered Iran.
4. Some of Iranian went to Europe and India and got familiar to new knowledge and transferred knowledge through translation of books and writing books and thesis and making relationship with people and learning some of European professions and industries.
5. Establishing modern schools and changing education structure from traditional to the modern style.
6. Establishing centers and schools like foreigners and appointing European teachers.

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